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WHA Press Guidance
January 23, 2002

VENEZUELA: CHAVEZ ARMING SUPPORTERS

Question: Can you confirm reports that Venezuelan President Chávez is arming supporters in preparation for January 23 marches and demonstrations? What is your reaction?

**A: WE HAVE NO INFORMATION TO CONFIRM SUCH
ALLEGATIONS.**

**OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE WELL BEING OF U.S. CITIZENS, OUR
CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEET WARNS OF SPORADIC
POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS, WHICH MAY AT TIMES TURN
VIOLENT, AND URGES U.S. CITIZENS TO MONITOR THE LOCAL
MEDIA OR CALL THE U.S. EMBASSY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.
ON JANUARY 22, WE ISSUED THE FOLLOWING NOTICE TO U.S.
CITIZENS IN VENEZUELA:**

**“VARIOUS POLITICAL EVENTS, INCLUDING DEMONSTRATIONS
AND MARCHES IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF CARACAS, ARE
PLANNED FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23. BECAUSE LARGE
CROWDS ARE PREDICTED FOR THESE EVENTS, STREET
DISTURBANCES ARE POSSIBLE AS WELL AS INCIDENTS OF PETTY**

CRIME. U.S. CITIZENS RESIDENT IN OR VISITING CARACAS SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS SITUATION AND MAY WISH TO AVOID THE DOWNTOWN MARCH ROUTES. FURTHER INFORMATION ON TRAVEL IN VENEZUELA IS AVAILABLE ON THE EMBASSY WEB SITE: [HTTP://EMBAJADAUSA.ORG.VE](http://EMBAJADAUSA.ORG.VE)."

[Background: In a January 22 CNN en Español interview, former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez stated that current President Chávez was arming his supporters in preparation for today's marches and demonstrations. Today, January 23, is the anniversary of the overthrow in 1958 of former dictator Pérez Jiménez and is considered by many Venezuelans to be the birthday of modern Venezuelan democracy. Today is not, however, a Venezuelan National Day.]